

1965 WAR

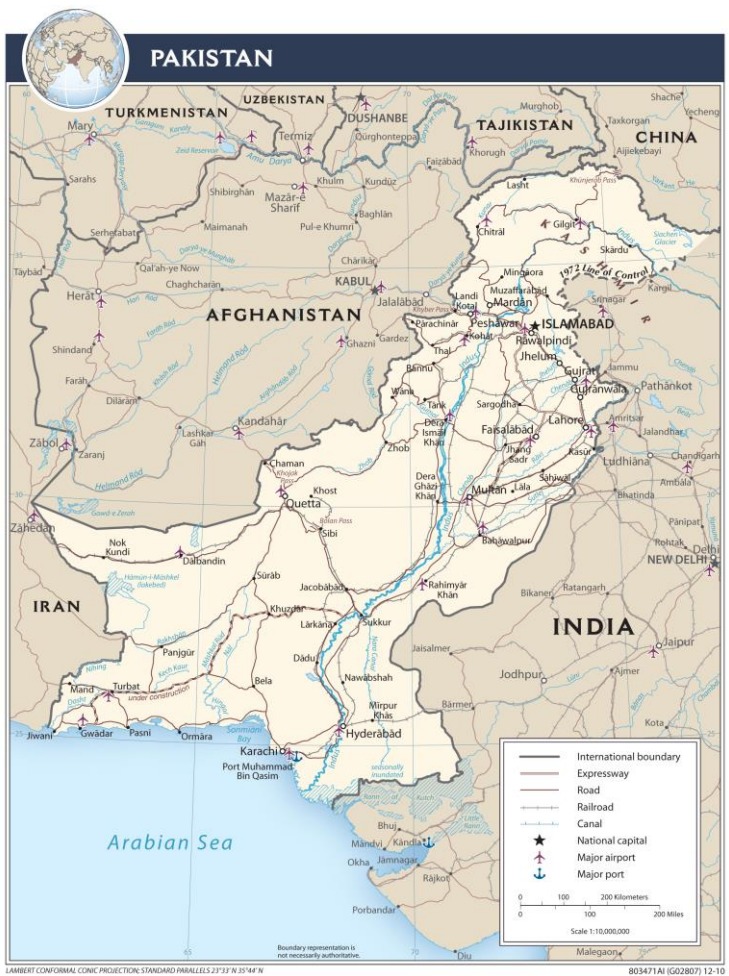
Pakistan Rangers

1965 War

Major Aamir Cheema (Retired)

9/9/2022

Present day Punjab Rangers and Sindh Rangers were a single entity during 1965 War. This is a narrative of the 1965 War



Pakistan Rangers in 1965 War

1965 is a golden year in the military chronicles of Pakistan, despite being outnumbered numerically in the strength, Pakistan's military took a much more larger India head on and by the end of year had captured more territory than the counterpart. More than the mere figures the fact that Pakistan through the valiant sacrifices of its armed forces and full support of civil population, brought home the point that, it cannot be cowed by India just because it is bigger in size. The very first and the last round in 1965 were fired by the Rangers. Year and the confrontation started with the Rann of Kutch in April, it moved to Kashmir in August where Pakistan fully supported the freedom fighters in Indian held Kashmir; Operation Gibraltar transitioned into Operation Grand Slam. When Indians realised that they are on the verge of another military defeat¹ they invaded across the international boundary. ***It was at Wahga that the fate of Pakistan was hanging in balance***², Pakistan Rangers were the first to detect, retaliate and suffer in this cowardly Indian attack. The war ended on 27th September 1965 but the skirmishes kept occurring, it was in south, in December 1965 that Rangers had their finest hour when they captured the Sadewala and Kishengarh forts.

¹ India was thoroughly trashed by the Chinese in 1962.

² Wahga is the shortest and direct route, a mere 20 miles from heart of Punjab and Pakistan; Lahore.

Rangers.

West Pakistan Rangers were being commanded by Brigadier Khuda Dad and spread over a frontage of 1400 kilometres, from Rann Of Kutch in the south to Head Marala in the north. It had three Corps, each being commanded by a lieutenant colonel, each corps had two-four wings which were being commanded either by a major or a captain. Wing is almost identical in organisation to a standard infantry battalion, thus having four companies and each company having three platoons which in turn had three sections of ten men each. Numerically a wing had more manpower but it drastically lacked in firepower, it had no anti-tank weapons, as a yard stick, only the obsolete weapons considered redundant by army were the main armoury of Rangers. They lacked communication equipment, vehicles, clothing, and logistics to name few. A Ranger post is not like an army post, it was meant only to curb the smuggling and to assist the local police, Rangers were not entitled to free ration or clothing which the army soldiers were having. A Ranger had to cook his own food, wash his own clothes, collect food from the local area, look after the animals on post which include camels and horses, and above all had no medical facilities to report sick. They were and still regarded as the second line of forces, however in reality they were deployed ahead of army units when the war broke out.

Hence Thus Rangers performance in the war has to be seen and appreciated in this background, it goes to the credit of all Rangers that when the 1965 year finally ended they had

captured more Indian territory than the regular army regiments. *143 Rangers embraced martyrdom, there were three decorations of Sitara –i-Jurat and five Tamgha Jurat, eight Sitara Shujaat and twelve Tamgha Shujaat.* Major casualties occurred at Wahga -43, Rajasthan -43, Kasur-27 and at Burki-11. Sotlej Rangers alone lost 103 all ranks in the war.

Birds Eye View of 1965 War

Pakistan Army Dispositions. On the eve of war Pakistan Army was commanded by General Musa Khan, army had a total of eight divisions, in which only one was armoured, 1st Armoured Division at Raiwind, the other, 6 Armoured Division at Daska was an adhoc division, organisationally, it had only one corps {1 Corps commanded by Lieutenant General Bakhtiar Rana}, infantry division included, 7 Division at Jallalpur, 15 Division at Sialkot, 11 Division at Kasur, 10 Division at Lahore, 12 Division at Murree and 18 Division in Sind. I Corps's area of responsibility included from River Chenab in north to Head Sulemanki in south; or simply along the Radcliffe Line in Punjab. Pakistan Ranger's Corps of Sotlej Rangers thus came under command I Corps.

Indians on the other hand had three corps {I,XI,XV} having a total of 12 infantry and mountain divisions.

In the **first phase**, 6-8 September, the pitched battle was fought on the gates of Lahore and Kasur. Sotlej Rangers had two more Wings namely Kasur Wing and Wagha Wing. It was the Sotlej Rangers which first broke the news of Indian attack. 'At 0350 hours, Rangers HQ reported to 114 Brigade, hostile shelling on Ichogal, Wahgah and Gawindi

Rangers posts'.³in the **second phase** 8-11 September, Pakistan launched its offensive in Kasur sector aiming towards the Amritsar, as a counter , in the **third phase**, Indians launched the main attack ,11-16 September, towards the Sialkot sector. In Sialkot sector there were two Rangers Wing{ex Sulej Rangers} namely Sialkot Wing and Narowal Wing thus having a total of eight companies, their task was to 'watching the area north of Chappar including the Phulkian salient'.⁴

1965 War ended on 23rd September, Pakistan was holding a sizeable chunk of Indian territory, in the southern desert Pakistan Army along with Rangers had Kishengarh Fort, Tanot, Longanewala, Ghutara and area right down to Shahgarh. In the line of posts from Islamgarh to Ghultara being held by own Rangers, there was one post Sadhewala, being held by Indians. Movement of troops from Longanewala to Tanot and Kishengarh thus required long detours. That Indian post was getting reinforcement from Ramgarh. Thus an operation was launched in winter in the desert.

First Fire, First Shaheed and First Prisoner of War

Indian attack had taken everyone by surprise ' enemy had achieved a complete surprise on us' 114 Brigade's War Diary notes.⁵ Thus Rangers were no exception to this , infact on the evening of 5th September, Sulej Rangers were busy in

³ Ibid,pp,194-207.

⁴ *The Pakistan Army War 1965*, p-144.

⁵ *Pakistan Army War 1965*, p-196.

preparing for the next morning monthly joint meeting, their vehicle just a few hours before the war was heading towards the border loaded with chairs and crockery.⁶

The Indian activity across the Wahga border was first picked up by Sub Inspector Mirza Sheeraz of 10 Wing, at 0200 hours, he noticed the heavy noise of Indian tank tracks, metal clinging against metal in the mid of night ; it was an extraordinary reverberations; he alerted the guard and took up positions. At 0345 hours the very first Indian shell landed near the post and then all of a sudden it was heavy machine gun fire, along with artillery shells exploding all around. None of the rangers had any such experience in the past, but they knew it is war which has started. Thus the very first round of fire on Indian advancing infantry was fired by the 10 Wing of Pakistan Rangers. Sepoy Adalat was task to bring the grenade boxes to the bunkers; the Indian firing was so intense that , own rangers soldiers had to crawl for moving between the different trenches in own post area; He became the very first shaheed of 1965 War, when a burst of enemy fire pierced through him, while , Adalat was in the process of shifting the grenade box. There were a total of 31 Rangers soldiers {one platoon} and by dawn, 11 of them had embraced shahadat. The remaining platoon manoeuvred to new position and in the process, encountered an Indian machine gun detachment , firing from under a small culvert, next to the railway line; they were taken as the very first Indian prisoners of war.

Major Aleem Ud Din was the wing commander at Wahga⁷ , Deputy Superintendent Rangers {DSR} Abdul

⁶ *History of Indo-Pak Wars 1965*.p-240.

Shakoor was his second in command. Wing headquarters, office area, accommodation, family quarters , all are located in between the BRB canal and the international boundary, in a belt of three odd miles. Major Aleem's aged father was also present as he was visiting his son. Within an hour after the first round of war, the wing was encircled by the Indian. It was a confused state of affairs, with artillery shells falling around, the noise of tanks moving, heavy and light machine guns rattling; soon the Indians entered into the wing area which was an open ground with few odd barracks here and there. Rangers were neither trained nor equipped for such eventuality, they had already performed much more than desired and expected.

Indian army's captain, along with his troops marched into the wing area, where Sub Inspector Taj Mohammad and few soldiers along with the wing commander and his father were standing , trying to make out something from this confused state of affairs. The captain , simply asked the wing commander to surrender, meanwhile his troops were taking position all around. Vehicle mechanic Zulfiqar alias Billu, was also standing close to Major Aleem, he tried to interfere in between the conversation taking place, on which the Indian Captain hurled abuses , instantly Billu opened fire and shot the captain; simultaneously the Indians reacted with an all out fire. It all happened within few seconds, Major Aleem and his

⁷ Inspector Taj Muhammad and Sheeraz survived the war and later served in the Rangers. Their experience were published in the *Nigran* an official yearly magazine of Pakistan Rangers, September 2008.

father were both dead⁸, Billu was wounded and Indians bayoneted him till he took his last breath . Only Taj Muhammad was able to survive amidst this carnage, although wounded, Sheraz and few soldiers were able to retreat back to the main defences, this was the very first encounter of 1965 War . Later when Indians moved further west , they were halted by the Major Aziz Bhatti{Nishan e Haider} on the banks of BRB canal.

Mahsud & Wazir

Major General Salim Ullah Khan⁹ , wrote ‘ *It was 7th September’s evening, C company of 5 Frontier Force Regiment was deployed on the banks of BRB canal, two soldiers of Sulej Rangers namely Akbar and Shah Wali were found straggling and were immediately caught, handcuffed and brought to company headquarters. On being satisfied that they are bona fide soldiers of Rangers, they were told to move back to their headquarters but both pleaded to be allowed to fight here as any movement and travelling will diminish their desire to fight the enemy; company commander agreed and both were allowed to fight alongside*’.

Sepoy Shah Wali Mahsud belonged to the Mahsud tribe of South Waziristan, whereas Lance Naik Akbar Khan Wazir hailed from North Waziristan, Mir Ali. They immediately proved their utility by highlighting the tracks and area in front

⁸ *The Pakistan Army War 1965*, p-194.

⁹ Major General Salim Ullah Khan was director general of Pakistan Rangers 1998-2000. See *Nigran*, September 2008.

of the company as both have spent almost years in the same territory; they were taken along in the fighting patrol. *'On 8th September, the company received the mission to launch an attack on the villages Charwalia in first phase and Kirka village in second phase. Shah Wali and Akbar acted as the guide in the successful attack, Shah Wali captured an Indian soldier as POW; the sole POW. As the war and tide fluctuated, between 9-11 September, the company was cut off from its rear to an extent that there was no fresh food; in such grim situation, these two Pathan Rangers kept their wits and sense of humour. The fighting patrol sent on the same evening in which these two were an integral part now, Shah Wali was able to get hold of two chicken as well while coming back . The reason why I am quoting is that it requires an extraordinary sense of confidence to be able to perform such acts which in normal time looks ordinary but in the heat of battle, he still cared for his adopted comrades even risking the life.*

On 13th September, Indian Air force carried out strafing on the company location and soon artillery shelling started ; Shah Wali rushed to the own light machine gun and helped the gunner in firing, it was here that he was hit with an artillery shell splinter. While being evacuated to the rear he took his last breath , Akbar fought the remaining days of the war with the company . after the termination of war , an officer of 5 FF escorted Akbar to Sutlej rangers with commendation letter from the battalion.'

Sepoy Niaz Badshah Khattak. SJ

Sepoy Niaz Badshah was also part of Suttlej Rangers wing, deployed on the Kasur sector. On the morning of 6th September at Jaman Post, which had a strength of two sections {20 soldiers} the first wave of Indian attack and fire power came as a surprise, it created a fog of war, in which soon the post was over run, however Niaz kept holding his fire bay. A ranger Post is bit different from the army post, as rangers were not authorised free ration thus they had to cook and also clean the post, whereas the army posts no matter where they are, are fed through the company or battalion . Thus a Ranger Post is more open and lacks the basic defensive material and infrastructure to withstand the heavy artillery and machine gun fire; same was the state of communication, as this post like so many other posts had only line communication with rear , and this line was soon cut off.

Niaz Badshah was born on 1st October 1930 in Karak and joined the Bahawalpur Border Police in 1951. As the Indian fire intensified, so did Badshah's retaliation and vigour. He refused to be cowed by the absolute hopeless situation in which he had a chance to survive provided he surrenders himself but he opted the path of warriors. In the end, when all had been over run, his was the sole bunker to offer a resistance. Indian after having failed to dislodge him, threw the grenades which promptly Niaz Badshah threw back, in the end, he embraced martyrdom. He was later praised by the Indians as well for his outstanding courage, his dead body was taken to his native village after the war and buried with full military honour. He was decorated with a Sitara Jurat for

his valour, he is the very first *Sitara Jurat* of Pakistan Rangers.

Rajasthan

India launched Operation Nepal in the south ‘ *The aim of opening the front in Barmer sector was to keep the Pak forces that had taken part in the Kutch operation tied down there and prevent them from rushing to the help of Pakistanis in the Lahore sector*’.¹⁰

Inspector Syed Gul Sher Ali¹¹ joined Sindh Police Rangers in 1950, in September 1965, while he was attending the map reading cadre in 53 Brigade, when on the morning of 6th September he received orders¹² from his commandant {Indus rangers} to move to Khokra Par. The wing was being commanded by Captain Mushtaq, who had organised a company with three platoons, Inspector Aurangzeb, Sub Inspector Hassan Ali and Havildar Gulab Shah were the platoon commanders, Gul Sher was made the commander of Mortar Platoon. Company was task to take up position in front of Munabhao railway station which is in Indian side of the border. Overall the 53 Brigade commanded by Brigadier Azhar was in control of the operations, apart from Rangers, 8 FF and 18 Punjab Regiments were part of the brigade, artillery support was ensured by 31 Field Regiment.

On 11/12 September, fire was brought upon the Indian defences in which own Rangers also took part, by

¹⁰ *History of Indo-Pak Wars*, p- 525

¹¹ Inspector Gul Sher Ali was decorated with Sitara-i-Jurat

¹² Ibid, also see *Nigraan*, 1985, 1986, 1987.

morning the railway station was captured by 18 Punjab Regiment. In continuation of the attack, another village Manchilo which is 12 miles north of Munabhao was also attacked, Rangers mortar platoon supported the advance of 8 FF's company commanded by Captain Rasheed. Gul Sher narrates '*I after the initial success at Munabhao was ordered to make a list of all the equipment captured by own forces...later I supported the attack of FF regiment, after reorganisation phase, I noticed an Indian soldier running , I ran after him and soon over powered him, he was in a state of shock , I left him out of pity and took his rifle, took out the bolt and threw the rifle behind a bush and move forward to search the area, after an hour when I came back , I found the Indian soldier dead, probably he had died of sheer fear. We found a large cache of ration from the captured Indian camp which we distributed among the villagers*'.

Ceasefire was put in action on the night of 23rd September however the action in Rajasthan continued but after the ceasefire the Rangers were made to lead the attack. The target was Shakar Bo post , Havildar Gul Sher along with a section strength reached the Shakar Bo and found it vacant , however enemy was holding the adjoining high sand dunes but they were well within their own area.

Indian Artillery records ' The Pakistan brigade aided by the Rangers and other irregulars contained the efforts of 11 Infantry Division'.¹³

¹³ As quoted in *History of Indo-Pak Wars*, 1965,p-527.

Sub Inspector Aurangzeb unfortunately died of heart attack on 6th October 1965. As a matter of interest, Havildar Sher Gul had to appear in the map reading examination in the battlefield, examination was held on 5th October at Khokra Par, he passed the examination and same evening , inspector ranks were put on his shoulder.

Desert Force- December 1965

When 1965 War ended, Pakistan was holding a sizeable chunk of Indian territory, in the southern desert Pakistan Army along with Rangers had Kishengarh Fort, Tanot, Longanewala, Ghutara and area right down to Shahgarh. In the line of posts from Islamgarh to Ghultara being held by own Rangers, there was one post Sadhewala being held by Indians. Movement of troops from Longanewala to Tanot and Kishengarh thus required long detours. That Indian post was getting reinforcement from Ramgarh.

The vast expanse of desert , with 51 brigade in south and 105 Brigade in North , a distance of 400 miles was militarily impossible to keep an eye on every sand dune in between, thus a new force was raised known as Desert Force. It was a combination of the Desert Rangers with Hurs as integral part. Hurs the same very religious followers of Pir of Pagara against whom the Sindh Police Rifles were raised in 1942, now voluntarily joined the Rangers for the said operation. ‘ Hurs, uninitiated in the art of modern warfare,

...compensated for their lack of military training with natural fighting skills acquired over ages in the desert'.¹⁴

Rangers Force was commanded by Brigadier Khuda Dad. In the desert the ground movement was difficult and time consuming, therefore aerial reconnaissance proved to be very useful both in planning and execution phase of this operation. From 27th November 1965 onwards, Aviation effort was mainly diverted towards reconnaissance of Sadhewala. Officers of the Rangers and infantry battalion which were to take part in the attack were flown. They include Major Tariq Rasul, Brigadier Khuda Dad, Lieutenant Colonel Majid, Lieutenant Colonel Talib and Lieutenant Colonel Toni Mahmood. Desert features present different perspective early morning and changes with passage of day and position of sun. Pilots flew early morning and then late in the afternoon, they also helped Rangers in making a sand model of the Sadhewala Post at their headquarters. D-Day was fixed on 2nd December 1965.

D-Day 2nd December 1965

Brigadier Hamid Chaudhry writes: "A dawn attack was planned, I took off before first light. The flying time from Rahim Yar Khan to Sadhewala via Sandh was about 40 minutes. I was on target 20 minutes before the first light. As planned earlier, I started with an Artillery Shoot as part of pre H-hour bombardment'.¹⁵

¹⁴ *History of Indo-Pak Wars 1965*, p-527.

¹⁵ Azam, Cheema, Madni, *History of Pakistan Army Aviation 1947-2007* {Islamabad, Army Press, 2008}, pp,91-92.

Sadhewala Post was located in a large bowl of sand with high brims. Enemy was sitting on the high ground. Enemy was pinned down by own accurate artillery fire and own troops reached assaulting position. The moment own artillery fire was lifted the Indians were able to open heavy machine gun fire on our assaulting troops. Indians after some time, started withdrawing, The whole post was littered with dead bodies. Indian Post commander, Lieutenant Paraveen Kumar was captured, he had thick eye glasses. When one of our soldier tried to blind fold him, Paraveen Kumar said, “Just take the glasses off, without them, I am blind.”